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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, January 10, 2008

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-5
Domestic Violence	6-12
*Health Care	13-28
Juvenile Justice	29-30
Poverty	31-32

*Important story at this spot



Thursday, January 10, 2008

Accused's kin cites threats

Defendant's mother says he questioned whether infant girl he's charged with killing was his.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

LINCOLN PARK -- Christopher Ryan Richardson frequently questioned whether he was the father of the 8-day-old baby whom he is accused of sexually assaulting and killing, according to court testimony.

Richardson's mother, with whom the couple lived, testified this week, quoting her son: "If the baby is mine, I'll take care of it." If Nevaeh Ann Richardson wasn't his baby, Adie Green said her son threatened abusive acts against the mother, Cynthia Goscicki, and the baby.

" 'I'm the devil,' he'd say."

The four-hour hearing Tuesday in 25th District Court shed clues about the events leading up to the Nov. 24 death of Nevaeh, who suffered massive bleeding and sepsis after she was rushed to the hospital.

The hearing was held to determine whether Richardson, 21, will stand trial on charges of felony murder, first-degree criminal sexual conduct and child abuse in connection with Nevaeh's death.

Richardson has denied killing his daughter.

"That was my baby. I loved her," Richardson said to a friend Tuesday in the courtroom.

Testimony showed some of the alleged violence between Richardson and Goscicki, who spoke about her relationship for the first time.

Richardson, 21, often beat, choked and slapped her, Goscicki said. He sexually assaulted her while she was pregnant and beat her up once when he thought she was unfaithful, said Goscicki, who filed a report against him in Flat Rock.

Three days before Nevaeh died, Richardson again suspected infidelity, she said. He ordered her out of their Lincoln Park home.

"While I was outside I could hear (the baby) crying," Goscicki, 21, testified. "It was an unusual cry. It was louder and it didn't sound like her crying."

When she came back inside the house, she saw Nevaeh was at the end of the bed with Richardson. "He was playing video games and she was crying," Goscicki said.

The baby didn't sleep well that night, and when Goscicki fed her at 4:30 a.m., she changed her diaper and noticed her bottom was red, but saw no blood. Richardson thought it was a diaper rash.

Goscicki put the infant back to bed but she didn't sleep well.

"She'd fall asleep but if she's moved, she'd wake up and cry," she said.

On Thanksgiving the next day, Goscicki went to her aunt's for dinner without Richardson. She changed the baby's diaper before she went and Nevaeh's bottom was still red.

When she came home, Richardson was drunk and had been throwing up in the house.

Goscicki showered and went to sleep on the living room couch with Nevaeh cradled in her arms. A few hours later, she woke up to loud music that Richardson was playing.

Soon after, blood began flowing from Nevaeh's nose and mouth so she was rushed to the hospital.

Nevaeh never came home. The hearing will resume Jan. 25.

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080110/METRO/801100368>



Woman suspected of abusing infant son

By ART BUKOWSKI

abukowski@record-eagle.com

KALKASKA -- Police arrested a woman who's suspected of severely abusing her infant son.

The woman, 24, is expected to be arraigned today on one count of first-degree child abuse, a 15-year felony, said Detective Sgt. Richard Simpson of the Michigan State Police Kalkaska post.

Troopers arrested the woman Tuesday evening, Simpson said, but he wouldn't identify her.

Court officials said Tamara Tomblin, 24, is scheduled to be arraigned today on one count of first-degree child abuse.

An acquaintance brought the infant, then five months old, to a Kalkaska hospital Sept. 17, Simpson said. Hospital staff discovered a broken leg and trauma to the baby's head, mouth and rectum.

The infant eventually was taken to DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids for recovery.

The woman recently had moved from Mancelona to her boyfriend's house in Kalkaska, Simpson said. Investigators believe the alleged abuse occurred there, but they don't know why it happened.

"We don't have any motive," Simpson said.

A press release later issued by Simpson said "numerous witness interviews" and evidence processed at the State Police crime lab led to the child abuse charge.

The baby is in foster care and doing fine, Simpson said.

"The child is making a very good recovery," he said.

The woman remained in jail Wednesday afternoon on a \$50,000 cash bond.

Record-Eagle Staff Writer Victor Skinner contributed to this report.

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Berkley man accused of incest

Human services employee believed to have fathered adopted daughter's child

By John Michalak
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

BERKLEY -- A Berkley man faces a preliminary examination on eight alleged sexual assaults against an adopted daughter in what authorities claim was an incestuous relationship that produced a baby.

The accused, Gerald Dale Snapp, 43, worked for the Michigan Department of Human Services, an agency which handles cases involving sexually and physically abused children.

Snapp is held at the Oakland County Jail in lieu of \$1.5 million cash bond pending his preliminary examination Jan. 29 in Berkley District Court.

"He worked for an agency whose goal is to protect children and families," said Oakland County assistant prosecuting attorney Robert Giles, head of office's Child Sexual Assault Division. "His job was to help families get grants and money for basic living expenses. He has had a number of foster children in the home.

"This child was brought into his house. He adopted her and got her pregnant. She was adopted by the time she had the child. She is an adult now. The tragedy is children who came to live in his home had suffered terrible abuse through their lives and he takes advantage of them."

Giles said the alleged victim has a different last name than Snapp.

Snapp, a 17-year employee with the Department of Human Services, has been suspended without pay pending outcome of the case, said agency spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet.

"He worked in our payments side where we make eligibility determinations for cash assistance, food assistance, Medicaid and other things," Sorbet said. "He worked in the Oakland County office in Pontiac. He was formerly a licensed foster parent through a private agency."

While calling the case "unique," defense attorney Jerome Sabotta declined further comment until he reviews it.

Sabotta said he received the case Tuesday at a pre-exam conference at the Berkley District Court. The allegations, he added, are that the victim was a minor at the time who was incapable of giving consent.

However, Sabotta suggested Snapp isn't charged with anything to do with the conception and birth of the child.

Berkley Magistrate and court administrator Michael Zychowski said the

alleged sexual assaults occurred over a three-year span while the victim was a minor.

The allegations became known to police through a Care House interview prior to Christmas. While a child was interviewed, authorities also had an opportunity to talk with the mother.

"It came to light (Snapp) was the father of the child," Giles said. "He is charged with having an incestuous relationship."

Police are continuing the investigation, authorities said.

"This poor woman's life has been one tragedy after another," Giles said. "She is a nice woman, but tough. This is something that hopefully is helping her."

Zychowski said Snapp is charged with one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct (CSC); two counts each of second- and fourth-degree CSC; and three counts of third-degree CSC. Snapp was arraigned Dec. 21.

Giles said two witnesses are expected to testify at the preliminary examination unless Snapp decides to waive it.

Contact John Michalak at john.michalak@dailytribune.com or (248) 591-2521.

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MORNING SUN

Murder trial set to start

By SUSAN FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

Testimony is expected to begin today with the son of an Isabella County woman describing the abuse she endured at the hands of the man accused of killing her.

Trent MacDonald, Becky Sue Mac-Donald's son, is expected to take the witness stand at 9 a.m. in Isabella County Trial Judge Mark Duthie's Mt. Pleasant courtroom as Gordon D. Schultz's trial gets under way.

Jurors on Monday listened to Chief Assistant Prosecutor Roy Kranz outline the case he will present against Schultz, 46, of Midland County.

Defense attorney Gordon Bloem urged jurors to listen carefully to testimony and keep in mind that Schultz is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

While outlining his case, Kranz told the 11-man, three-woman jury that Trent MacDonald and Terrie Thrush, Becky Sue MacDonald's daughter, will speak of Schultz strangling, hitting and kicking their mother during a stormy relationship that resulted in Schultz being convicted of third-offense domestic violence in Midland County in May 2006.

That conviction came about six months after MacDonald disappeared from her home in Fremont Township and weeks after she testified against Schultz at a preliminary hearing.

Kranz also told jurors that MacDonald, 42 years old when she disappeared, was in good health and dedicated her life to caring for others, including an uncle who had Alzheimer's Disease.

Kranz showed the jury a series of photographs of Mac-Donald with a black eye and bruised neck that were taken after encounters with Schultz and described Mac-Donald's repeated calls to Women's Aid in Mt. Pleasant after she chose to leave Schultz in October 2005.

Kranz also said witnesses will testify during the trial, scheduled to last 10 days, that Schultz rented a car Oct. 24, 2005 and, when questioned by co-workers, explained that he didn't think he could fit MacDonald into the back of his own vehicle.

Schultz repeatedly threatened MacDonald in the months before she disappeared, Kranz told the jury.

"Mr. Schultz always told Becky that her grave was already dug," Kranz said.

Kranz also spoke of testimony about telephone records that will show a call

to MacDonald's cell phone on Nov. 11, 2005 -- the day she was last seen alive -- from a pay phone at a service station on M-20 in Midland County near Schultz's home, and another call later that day from a pay phone in Shepherd.

In between those calls, Kranz said, records will show that MacDonald called Schultz's home from her cell phone.

During Kranz's opening statment, jurors heard audiotaped conversations between Schultz and state police Detective Sgt. William Eberhardt, who went undercover posing as a hit man.

Schultz's cell mate at the Southern Michigan Correctional Facility in Jackson -- he has since been transferred to the Michigan Reformatory in Ionia -- is expected to testify that he, as a confidential informant, arranged the meeting between Schultz and Eberhardt because Schultz allegedly believed Thrush was pushing police to continue the investigation into MacDonald's disappearance.

Kranz also told jurors that police found MacDonald's body in a remote area in Midland County's Edenville Township after Schultz allegedly told Eberhardt where he buried her.

"They went to a very specific spot," Kranz said. "They dug one hole, and they found the victim in that hole."

Witnesses will also show that Schultz first tried to cover up MacDonald's murder by burning her and the clothing that he was wearing, and ultimately asking Eberhardt to get get rid of her body, Kranz said.

Bloem told jurors that, although they will likely hear much testimony depicting Schultz in a negative light, they cannot convict Schultz of murder because he "isn't a nice guy."

"The question is proof beyond a reasonable doubt," Bloem said.

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MORNING SUN

Former co-worker testifies in murder trial

By SUSAN FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

A former co-worker of a Midland County man accused of murder spoke Tuesday of threats and a rental car allegedly used to dispose of the body of his ex-girlfriend.

Joshua Roberts, who worked at a commercial painting shop in Midland County with Gordon D. Schultz, told jurors in Isabella County Trial Judge Mark Duthie's courtroom that Schultz said he rented a four-door sedan because he couldn't put Becky Sue MacDonald's body in the back of his Ford hatchback.

Roberts also testified that Schultz, 46, who is charged with one open count of murder and aggravated assault, told him "that bitch should die."

Roberts told jurors that he heard about MacDonald's Nov. 11, 2005 disappearance "about a week" after he saw the car Schultz rented.

Roberts, whose testimony Tuesday varied from what he said during Schultz's preliminary hearing, explained that he "has a lot of other things going on" when asked by Chief Assistant Prosecutor Roy Kranz about the differences.

After reading transcripts of his earlier testimony, Roberts said that his memory was refreshed and that Schultz threatened to kill MacDonald "at least once," although his earlier testimony indicated that Schultz issued similar threats on several occasions.

Defense attorney Gordon Bloem questioned Roberts' memory during testimony Tuesday afternoon, after Roberts said that he had trouble remembering because his original testimony was more than a year ago.

Schultz' preliminary hearing was in May.

"I might forget what I testified in the past...but what I testified was the truth," Roberts said.

Bloem countered that Roberts said he was truthful Tuesday, but his testimony had changed.

Another witness on Tuesday testified that Schultz wrote him a letter from prison -- Schultz is serving time for a third-offense domestic violence conviction against MacDonald -- telling him to tell investigators the truth.

Schultz's letter to Charles Pnacek Jr., who also worked at the paint shop in Midland County, also included a reference to Pnacek working on a job in Ohio when MacDonald disappeared.

In the letter, Schultz suggested that Pnacek tell authorities that Schultz was with him in Ohio; Pnacek testified that he was not.

While being questioned by Bloem, Pnacek admitted that he was using drugs and alcohol in October 2005, when Schultz was arrested for domestic violence, and in the following month, when MacDonald disappeared.

In other testimony Tuesday, the lead investigator in the case described to jurors where police found MacDonald's body Jan. 23 in the AuSable State Forest in Midland County's Edenville Township.

Isabella County Sheriff's Detective Sgt. David Patterson described how officers found the gravesite Jan. 23, off a two-track road in Edenville Township.

Patterson told jurors that an undercover state police officer posing as a hit man at the state prison in Jackson was given "specific details" about where MacDonald was buried off the two-track near an area where ferns were growing.

Officers quickly found the long stick that marked the grave and dug only one hole before finding MacDonald, Patterson testified.

He is accused of slaying MacDonald a few weeks after she testified against him in the domestic violence case in Midland County.

Schultz is alleged to have tried to hire a hit man – who was actually a state police detective sergeant from the major crimes unit in Lansing – to kill MacDonald's daughter, Terrie Thrush, because he believed she was prompting the continued investigation into her mother's disappearance.

Schultz was charged with her murder April 19.

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Wife testifies about situation that led to husband's assault

Thursday, January 10, 2008

By Danielle Quisenberry

dquisenberry@citpat.com -- 768-4929

Martha Baldwin was sitting on a sofa in the Blackman Township home she shared with her husband when he held a revolver to her face and threatened her life, she testified Wednesday.

"I said, 'Oh my God, no.' And I screamed, and I didn't stop screaming," said Baldwin, during the first day of Ricky Baldwin's jury trial.

Ricky Baldwin, 56, her husband of about 14 years, is charged with assault with intent to murder, using a firearm while committing a felony, and being a felon in possession of a firearm. He faces up to life in prison.

His trial was to continue today in Jackson County Circuit Court before Judge John McBain.

Baldwin is accused of shooting his wife once in the neck and once in the ear on June 16 after the two argued. Martha Baldwin still is receiving medical treatment, but has recovered.

Prosecutor Jessica Sutherland argued Baldwin shot with the intent to kill his wife, whom he repeatedly accused of cheating.

Defense lawyer Robert Gaecke said Baldwin's intent is not so clear. "There is a lot more to the story than the picture that the prosecutor laid out," he said.

Gaecke argued Ricky Baldwin had tried to fix the couple's relationship, which had been crumbling in the last few years -- in part due to Martha's struggles with breast cancer. He suggested marriage counseling, but Martha Baldwin refused, Gaecke said.

Martha Baldwin testified that she suggested marriage counseling, but Gaecke, pointing out inconsistencies in her statements, played a tape of an interview at the University of Michigan Medical Center during which she says her husband had mentioned it.

She testified Ricky Baldwin was convinced she had been having an affair with their longtime friend.

The couple had met the friend at a Horton bar about 7:30 p.m. the night of the shooting.

At about 8:30 p.m., Ricky Baldwin became upset after watching his friend and wife interact, his wife said. "He went to the bathroom, came back, guzzled his beer, slammed the bottle on the table and said, 'Come on, let's get out of here.'"

Throughout the 14-mile drive home and for hours at their home, he "belittled her," called her names and accused her of indecencies, she said.

Finally, to appease him, she admitted to an affair she says she did not have.

He then shot her as she tried to get out of the house, she said.

She sought shelter at a home across the street and Baldwin continued shooting, hitting at least two neighboring homes and firing into the air before leaving the scene, Sutherland said.

Martha Baldwin has since filed for divorce, which is pending, and is ``casually dating" the friend they met at the bar, Martha Baldwin testified.

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Father Charged In Death Of Unborn Baby

POSTED: 5:59 pm EST January 9, 2008
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WESTLAND, Mich. -- Police tell Local 4 a Westland man who said he wanted his girlfriend to have an abortion is accused of making it happen, when she refused.

The woman lost the baby, and now the boyfriend is charged with beating her.

Last week Daniel Jarrett II showed up while his girlfriend was visiting from Texas and staying in Central City in Westland.

Two witnesses told police Jarrett punched and kicked her in the stomach.

His 19-year-old girlfriend was six months pregnant.

She miscarried a couple of days later, and Jarrett turned himself in to police last weekend.

On Wednesday, Jarrett was charged with a felony, which carries a possible 20-year sentence.

He pleaded not guilty.

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Ballot drive seeks to make health care a legal guarantee

By CATHERINE KAVANAUGH
Of Journal Register News Service

ROYAL OAK Jeff Lindemier of Waterford Township is one of the estimated 1.1 million Michigan residents without health insurance.

The restaurant where he works offers coverage, but his share of the cost escalated beyond what his family could afford.

"They kept raising the price, and I finally had to drop it. I can't understand why," a frustrated Lindemier said.

Lindemier spoke at a Tuesday morning news conference to launch a ballot drive aimed at giving everyone in the state a legally guaranteed right to health care coverage. The measure seeks to amend the Michigan Constitution and force the state Legislature to develop a "health care security plan" that will protect people and businesses from rising costs.

John Freeman, chairman of the Healthcare for Michigan ballot committee, gathered uninsured residents, lawmakers, clergy and doctors at St. John's Episcopal Church to demonstrate a diverse coalition calling for a solution to what they see as the No. 1 national and state issue.

"The federal government isn't doing anything about it," said Freeman, a former state representative for Royal Oak, Madison Heights and Hazel Park. "States like California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont no longer are waiting for them to act."

Michigan, in particular, needs health care reform to help businesses compete overseas, Freeman said. Small and big businesses can't keep up with costs, yet they have to provide insurance benefits to attract top talent.

"Their global competitors don't have this problem because their countries provide health care," Freeman said.

A bottom-up solution is needed, he added, and it could start with voters signing petitions demanding that the state Legislature pass laws to control health care costs and give all residents comprehensive coverage through public or private means.

To get the initiative on the Nov. 4 ballot, the committee needs more than 380,000 signatures by July 1.

Yada Phillips is ready to be a voice shouting out to Lansing. She didn't have

health insurance when her 2-year-old son was seriously ill. Medical tests and doctor visits cost her \$250,000, and 10 years later she still is tackling the bill.

Phillips has coverage now. She works as a certified nurse assistant at a nursing home - where she sees insured elderly patients released when their coverage runs out even though their medical problems persist.

"I've been on both sides, and this system is hurting all of us," Phillips said.

Petition backers contend the key to reform is to use the funding that is available more wisely. Between \$57 billion and \$63 billion a year is spent on health care in Michigan, according to the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers. That amounts to about \$6,000 a person, which Healthcare for Michigan advocates contend should be enough to cover everyone's preventive, primary, acute and chronic health care needs.

However, Freeman and his supporters aren't putting a specific reform package on the ballot. The goal of the petition drive is for voters to order the state Legislature to act.

"Far too many people are one serious accident or pink slip away from bankruptcy and losing their health care," Freeman said. "That's wrong."

The measure also would ensure that people who have health insurance don't lose it.

State Rep. Marie Donigan, D-Royal Oak, is on board. Donigan sits on a policy committee that takes testimony about health care deficiencies.

"After every two-hour hearing, you leave the room more boggled about how it got so complicated," Donigan said at Tuesday's event. "We can't be the great state we have been unless we get a handle on this."

Petition backers point out automakers spend more on health care than on steel for cars.

Healthcare for Michigan expects to work with Robert Fowler, executive director of the Small Business Association of Michigan, to reform the system.

"I'm pushing them to develop specific reform proposals to give the Legislature to begin their deliberations," Freeman said.

It can't happen soon enough for Lindemier. If he is sick, he doesn't go to the doctor anymore. He did it once and got a bill for about \$2,000.

"It's hard to come up with that much money in this day and age," said Lindemier, adding that he worries every day about getting seriously ill or being in a car accident. "It would devastate me."

Half of all bankruptcies can be attributed to medical problems, even for people who have insurance, according to Freeman.

"With a catastrophic illness, you can exhaust your policy and end up in debt," he said.

Dr. Susan Steigerwalt, who has a private practice, said health care providers don't want to deny anyone treatment or add to their financial hardships.

She said she regularly sees patients for free. However, she can't send them for diagnostic tests or pay for their prescriptions.

"I practice medicine with one hand tied behind my back," Steigerwalt said.

She is among a dozen doctors and health administrators to join the coalition, which also includes AARP Michigan, human rights agencies, churches and unions.

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MIRS

January 8, 2008

Healthcare Entitlement Bid Under Way

A coalition of groups (including AARP and Progress Michigan) held 14 news conferences across the state to launch the Michigan Health Care Security Campaign, which would constitutionally direct the state Legislature to come up with some form of universal healthcare system. Healthcare for Michigan (HFM) appears to want to establish healthcare as a government-guaranteed right. With that in mind, the initiative avoids details — such as how the new system would work — leaving those decisions, at least ostensibly, up to future lawmakers (and presumably the courts) to determine.

"We're not directing them as to how they have to do it," former Rep. John **FREEMAN**, the Chair of HFM, said at the Lansing press conference this afternoon. "We're not saying it has to be government-based."

Some heavy political hitters jumped on-board with the initiative in what appeared to be a wellcoordinated public relations push today.

In response to a reporter's question at a press availability this morning Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** said

she supports the initiative and called it a "great idea."

The follow-up question was "Why?"

"I'll be talking more about this later, but I think one of the reasons manufacturing has been so challenged is because of the cost of health care that this country requires that employers pick up yet other countries do not," Granholm said.

"It's more expensive to manufacture in this country and it makes it easy for people to move jobs to countries that provide that support," she added. "We need to be competitive as a state, as a nation and

in order to be competitive that means we have to have a partnership on health care - a uniquely American solution to the cost of healthcare in this country. And that means that affordable access to healthcare should be available to every single person."

This afternoon, Senate Minority Leader and 7th Congressional District candidate Mark **SCHAUER** (DBattle Creek) announced that he had joined the HFM.

"A comprehensive, long-term health care strategy is critical to Michigan's economic recovery," said

Schauer. "Unaffordable health care costs Michigan jobs, makes our companies less competitive, and puts an incredible burden on families who are already struggling to make ends meet. This type of bold reform should be a priority and is frankly long overdue."

It seems likely that Granholm will mention, perhaps even highlight, the initiative in her upcoming State of the State Address. The genesis of the initiative may even be part and parcel of an overall effort to create fresh issues for her and the Democrats in 2008.

In response to a question about Granholm's health care initiative (to get Medicaid waivers from the federal government), Freeman said that, due to no fault of the Governor, the plan didn't seem to be making head way. But he added that dynamic change could change with a new administration.

This all fit in with one of the initiative's themes, which is that the national government is failing to act on health care, therefore the state's must step up top the plate.

"Michigan must take the initiative because too many families and businesses are suffering and we cannot wait any longer for Washington to act," Freeman said.

Potential opponents of the initiative seemed somewhat befuddled today as to how seriously they should take the initiative in terms of it being a political threat. For the time being, they're watching developments and hoping to discover the answers to a number of questions, such as:

1. Who is behind it?

One source suggested billionaire George **SOROS** is behind it and similar initiatives in other states. Soros

has been outspoken in his criticism of profit-based healthcare. However, Freeman denied any Soros

connection when *MIRS* asked him about it this afternoon.

Another theory is that it's the labor unions, led by the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) just

tossing ideas up to see what sticks and what might drive favorable voter turnout in November.

SEIU is a core member of the HFM coalition. Some see the health care initiative as going hand-to-hand

with the anti-"Right to Work" effort that the unions are undertaking.

Considering that there's little

evidence anyone is planning to a Right to Work movement in 2008, some observers see the anti-Right to

Work card as just more base-building.

2. Does the initiative have any real money behind it?

Freeman said the coalition is "trying everything" to raise money, including use of the Internet. This

creates the impression that the answer to the "Is-their-big-money-behind-it?" question is "no." But the

situation may be one where the initiative would have to prove its political worth before it attracts some

big money.

3. Does the initiative really have a chance of getting on the ballot?

(See Questions #1 and #2.)

4. Is the initiative aimed at actual passage or would it be just a tool for bringing out the Democratic base?

While this question is interesting, it's also probably irrelevant to the extent that if the initiative gets on the

ballot, conservative market-oriented entities would surely be forced to battle it. To them, the initiative is a

set up for an all-encompassing entitlement program that would be a huge step toward socialized

medicine.

The ballot language is as follows:

The State legislature shall pass laws to make sure that every Michigan resident has affordable and

comprehensive health care coverage through a fair and cost-effective financing system. The Legislature is

required to pass a plan that, through public or private measures, controls health care costs and provides for medically necessary preventive, primary, acute and chronic health care needs.

A Hard Myth To Kill

Freeman and others at the Lansing press conference today claimed there are "more than 1 million"

uninsured persons in Michigan. Recall that *MIRS* debunked this number last year, by citing the Granholm-commissioned State Planning Project (SPP) For the Uninsured report, which set the number of uninsured at roughly 800,000.

That number could further be whittled down based on how many persons among the 800,000 were actually eligible for health care programs and how many were just between jobs (See "[Michigan's Uninsured ... 1.1M, 800K or 200K?](#)" 01/23/07).

Granholm made the correction in her State of the State Address last year, but once a number like "1.1

million uninsured" is verbally established, apparently it dies hard.

Interestingly, the first group to use the "over a million uninsured" tag after Granholm's State of the state last year was a group of Senate Republicans in a health care-related news release.

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Article published Jan 9, 2008
State health-care reform focus of rallies

By NICHOLAS DESHAIS
Times Herald

A broad coalition of labor, political and health-care organizations traveled Michigan Tuesday beginning an effort to get universal health care on the November ballot.

State Rep. John Espinoza, D-Croswell, was at the St. Clair County Administrative Offices Building in Port Huron to rally for the initiative along with other local dignitaries and a representative from the Healthcare for Michigan Ballot Committee.

The committee wants to amend the state constitution to institute health care as a right for every Michigan resident.

To get the issue on November's ballot, the committee must collect 380,000 signatures by July 7.

"It's such an extremely important issue in Michigan," John Freeman, chairman of the ballot committee, said in a phone interview.

Freeman gave two reasons why universal health care should be enacted: to "modernize the Michigan economy" and to insure "over one million people" who lack coverage.

Support for the ballot initiative comes from the AARP and the Service Employees International Union, among others.

Benjamin estimates approximately \$60 billion a year, about \$6,000 per person, is spent on health care in Michigan. He suggested the high cost of health care has pushed many employers out of the state, including to nearby Ontario where health costs are covered by the government.

"One of the reasons car manufacturers cite for moving to Canada is because the health-care costs are more manageable," Benjamin said.

Ontario surpassed Michigan's auto production in 2004.

Major opposition to the Healthcare for Michigan movement has yet to form, but there are potential detractors.

"We're trying to ferret it out," said Jim Holcomb, vice president of business advocacy for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

Holcomb said achieving universal health care is "a laudable goal," but that the imprecise language in the ballot initiative "could

mean a lot of things to a lot of people."

The biggest name attached to the ballot initiative is Lt. Gov. John Cherry. According to his spokesman, T.J. Bucholz, Cherry will be "active" in helping get the initiative on the ballot.

"We recognize in Michigan we need a uniquely American solution in health care," Bucholz said. "There are far too many people without health care."

Freeman, the chairman of the ballot committee, compares the group's approach to the effort that prompted health-care reform in Massachusetts under then-Gov. Mitt Romney.

By "engaging the public in a grassroots campaign," Freeman said the campaign would attract all stakeholders, such as the business community, Blue Cross- Blue Shield, labor unions and the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

"We're not advocating a specific reform," Freeman said. "We don't care if it's a public solution or a private solution. We're going to leave that to the legislature to figure out."

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Group seeks state vote on health care reform

By [Amy Lane](#)

A coalition seeking universal health care coverage for Michigan residents on Tuesday launched a petition drive to place health care reform before voters in November.

The **Healthcare for Michigan Ballot Committee** is gathering signatures for a ballot proposal that, if approved, would require the Legislature to pass laws to provide "affordable and comprehensive health care coverage through a fair and cost-effective financing system," as stated in the proposed constitutional amendment.

The "health care security plan" would also need to contain health care costs to businesses, the coalition said.

The group, which is chaired by former state Rep. John Freeman, D-Madison Heights, and includes Lt. Gov. John Cherry and labor, faith-based, medical, civil rights and health care organizations, needs to collect more than 380,000 signatures by July 1 to place the measure on the Nov. 4 ballot.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Health care reform from this Legislature?

Thursday, January 10, 2008

The Michigan Health Care Security campaign would like to order the state Legislature to work miracles.

The campaign, the brainchild of the Michigan Universal Healthcare Access Network -- or MichUHCAN -- intends to place on the November state ballot this constitutional amendment:

"The State Legislature shall pass laws to make sure that every Michigan resident has affordable and comprehensive health care coverage through a fair and cost effective financing system. The legislature is required to pass a plan that, through public or private measures, controls health care costs and provides for medically necessary preventive, primary, acute and chronic health care needs."

And while the Legislature is at it, why doesn't it just fix Michigan's economy, reverse global warming and get the Lions to the Super Bowl?

This is the state Legislature that was unable to pass a balanced 2008 budget until the state was descending into a shutdown.

This is the state Legislature that took six months to find a replacement business tax for the expiring state Single Business Tax.

This is the state Legislature that couldn't repeal a controversial sales tax on services until it was about to take effect.

And MichUHCAN thinks this Michigan Legislature can somehow solve the health care affordability crisis that is leaving Americans without health care and American employers staggering under the cost of providing health insurance to their workers?

Perhaps this is simply an attempt to gauge public support for a universal national health care program. Although the idea of a federal program akin to Medicare and Medicaid was sent crashing into flames by Harry and Louise in the mid-1990s, it is clear there is still interest in it.

Or perhaps it is a way to prod state government to do what may never happen at the federal level. It has been noted that a similar ballot signature drive was under way when the Massachusetts Legislature passed a groundbreaking plan for making health insurance coverage nearly universal.

It's clear that health care accessibility is reaching a crisis point in America, where some 46 million people -- more than 1 million of them in Michigan -- lack health insurance. And the United States spends more per-capita on health care than in most industrialized nations, with poorer outcomes, according to many surveys.

The MichUHCAN ballot proposal may be a good way to impress upon elected leaders that Michigan residents want action.

But the Michigan Legislature is just about the last place one should expect to get it.

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ourMidland.com
from the Midland Daily News

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Our View: In this instance, the end doesn't justify the means

Come November, certainly there will be lots of candidates upon whom to vote, including the big kahuna of them all -- the presidential race.

If advocates for universal health care in Michigan have their way, though, there will be at least one more question.

A petition drive is under way to amend the state Constitution to require lawmakers to find a solution for Michigan's 1.1 million uninsured residents. The Michigan Health Care Security Campaign, a group of health care, labor and civil rights activists, needs to gather 475,000 signatures by July 7 to have the measure on the November ballot.

Certainly their intent is admirable. Lack of insurance is a problem not only for the people without coverage, but for everyone else who has to cover their costs, from hospitals to doctors to everyone who is insured and therefore bears part of the burden. Michigan has made some strides in the last decade, but also has taken steps backward, and a viable solution that can be supported year to year regardless of budget travails is needed.

The petitioners also note that reforming health care will help restructure the state's economy and allow businesses to remain competitive. Done properly, yes it will. Health coverage is one of the first things prospective employees look at, and also one of the biggest costs of doing business. A "trickle up" from reforming the lower end of the problem could benefit many others.

Still, while we support the end, we can't support the means. It is our firm belief that the state Constitution should address only the very basics of civilization. Health insurance, while vital, does not fall there. Yes, we need reform, but wish the petitioners would find some other way to bring it about.

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AIDS in the spotlight

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#)

January 10, 2008 09:29AM

Categories: [Editorial](#)

The following is the [Jackson Citizen Patriot's](#) editorial for January 10:

More than two decades after America first discovered AIDS, the disease has become an accepted, if less-noticed, part of our lives.

A mix of drugs has allowed some of the disease's original sufferers to live longer than expected, while its spread has slowed. But AIDS hasn't gone away. That's why an AIDS/HIV awareness event slated for next month in Jackson is a good idea.

Some 150 people in Jackson County live with the HIV virus that causes AIDS. They're among 17,000 in Michigan. In particular, black people in the state are afflicted with HIV at a disproportionately high rate. Anecdotal evidence also suggests those who have survived with HIV for years are more susceptible to other diseases.

The statistics spurred 23-year-old Victoria Toland to organize the Feb. 2 event at the King Recreation Center. The county Health Department and others will share information, while those who attend can be tested.

Kudos to Toland for getting this event on the calendar and the disease back on our awareness screen.

The event should provide a needed service -- and a reminder to everyone that a disease that once created hysteria is still a problem for many.

-- Jackson Citizen Patriot

January 9, 2008

CROPSEY: NO SENTENCING CHANGES IN BUDGET

As the two Appropriations subcommittees addressing the Department of Corrections budget wrapped up a joint hearing on health care issues in prisons, the department also received a warning on what would not be accepted in the coming budget, at least on the Senate side.

Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt), chair of the Senate subcommittee, said his committee at least would not consider budget cuts based on sentencing guidelines changes, or any other policy changes, unless those policies were already in place.

"I want to make sure the budget you give us is based on currently policy," he told Corrections Director Patricia Caruso. "Don't base a budget on sentencing guidelines changes until they're actually in place."

Mr. Cropsey noted that the current year budget, as originally presented, included savings from sentencing changes that never moved through the Legislature.

The three-hour joint hearing was dedicated to changes the department is developing in how it provides medical services to prisoners, including efforts to commute and parole medically-fragile prisoners.

Under [Governor Jennifer Granholm](#)'s proposal to parole more prisoners with serious medical conditions, 615 prisoners have been reviewed and 159 have been paroled, officials said. Another nine received commutations.

But one barrier to releasing some of the prisoners is ensuring they have medical care once they are out. Qualifying for Medicaid currently takes between two and three months, leaving former inmates without medical treatment during that time.

George Pramstaller, chief medical officer for the department, noted for instance that prisoners wanting to receive treatment for hepatitis C must have at least three months more than the expected period of treatment left to their sentence. He said the department had started treatment for some inmates who were released during the course of that treatment, but the department was not able to find facilities in the community that could continue the treatment.

Because of the nature of hepatitis C treatment, he said waiting for the prisoner to become Medicaid eligible before resuming it would essentially require starting the treatment over.

The meeting did potentially prompt some discussions between Corrections officials and those at the **Department of Human Services**. Though Ms. Caruso said it was not possible to use Medicaid funds for inmates, House Subcommittee Chair [Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith](#) (D-Salem Twp.) said she had been told recent federal rule changes would allow Medicaid funds to cover hospital stays for inmates.

Whatever the source of funding, the department expects some changes to the way it delivers healthcare in the coming months. A comprehensive study of the department's services is expected to be presented Friday.

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care was contracted last year to conduct the review and to compare what it found to be best practices around the country. Officials said the report, which was originally due in November, was late because the review had been more complex than NCCHC had originally anticipated.

The department will also be conducting some future reviews, as officials noted the NCCHC report will not go into the depth on mental health issues, which is required in current boilerplate language.

But the department is already working on some of the changes that will be proposed in the NCCHC report. Key among those will be a change in nursing staff at prison clinics.

While physicians are provided through the contracted health care provider, nursing staff is still the department's direct responsibility. And Mr. Pramstaller said it has not been able to fill the vacancies, even through contract agencies, in recent months because the department does not pay market rates for registered nurses.

To help fill the gaps, more of the posts will be filled by licensed practical nurses, where he said state wages are more competitive.

Filling the posts with state employees will help to save money because it will ensure less turnover among the nursing staff, he said. It takes as long as six weeks to train an incoming nurse on procedures in the clinics, but he said they were often rotated out by the contractor after three months.

A new provider for health care is not expected until 2009. Ms. Caruso said the department had extended its contract with Corrections Medical Services after an attempt last year to develop a new managed care-based contract collapsed.

The initial request for proposals drew only four bids, only one of which was qualified and that, in the end, was withdrawn. She said the companies that

could bid on the services did not completely understand what the department needed and department officials did not understand how different their requirements were from Medicaid, which was the basis for the initial RFP.

Ms. Caruso said a meeting with some 50 potential providers in November helped to better shape the new RFP planned to be released in March.

The department is also taking bids for a new pharmacy provider and a company to develop electronic medical records for prisoners.

Ms. Caruso said the department may look at rolling mental health services, which are currently provided by the Department of Community Health, into the healthcare contract in the future, but she said movement on that will be cautious.

"We got into the system we're in as a result of litigation," she said. "We don't want to make any moves that are counterproductive."

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Article published Jan 10, 2008

Maxey to phase out medium-security youth

By Christopher Behnan

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

State officials are working to relocate 80 medium-security beds from the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Green Oak Township by May 1.

The facility will be reserved for high-security offenders, and will no longer hold medium-security youth.

Meanwhile, state Bureau of Juvenile Justice and legislators appear at odds as to whether the displaced youth are destined for strictly private facilities as outlined in a new state law.

The law — state Public Act 131 — was signed into law by Gov. Jennifer Granholm on Oct. 31 as part of the new state budget.

The law states that the medium-security offenders at Maxey will be placed in community-based or privately operated facilities.

State Bureau of Juvenile Justice officials, meanwhile, said judges will decide if the youth are placed in public or private facilities once assessments are completed.

Michigan Department of Human Services spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet acknowledged the law, but said judges will make the final call.

"I don't think the Legislature can tell the courts what to do," Sorbet said.

On Wednesday, however, Sorbet explained the department is only in charge of processing the Maxey inmates, and that courts will have to confirm how they will comply with the legislation.

Livingston County Juvenile Court officials didn't immediately return phone calls Wednesday.

Shifting the 80 medium-security beds

into private agencies would save the state \$9 million annually, according to a press release issued by state Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, chairman of Senate appropriations panel for the Department of Human Services.

Hardiman didn't immediately return phone calls. His office, however, confirmed the law specifically calls for the youth to be transferred to private agencies.

But Kurt Warner, acting director of the state Bureau of Juvenile Justice, said courts will have the final say.

"The court makes the decision as to where the youth will be placed, whether it's in a public facility or it's in a private facility," Warner said.

"I do not see a push to privatize juvenile justice services in Michigan," he added.

The new law also calls for the "displacement" of 137 of 268 Maxey employees, whom the department will attempt to find placement for in similar facilities, Warner said.

The budget allows for 131 staff members.

Some new department jobs have been appropriated for to support reductions at Maxey, he said.

There are eight other state-run juvenile facilities in Michigan in need of staffing, Warner said.

Warner said the displaced employees will likely be given first shot at jobs that open up at Maxey in the future.

The W.J. Maxey Advisory Council last month circulated a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, and House Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township, as well as Granholm, pleading with the state to reconsider the cuts.

The letter notes previous population cuts at Maxey, and says the state has a "lack of awareness" of what will be lost once the cuts are made. Most notably, the reductions will diminish sex offender treatment, which is in strong demand at the facility, the letter states.

"Maxey's been there for that," said council member Kenneth Rimstad.

The letter also states that the reductions could provide short-term savings, but produce long-term costs due to increased recidivism among youth offenders.

Rimstad said "step-down" security, or prerelease preparation, is done under close supervision by staff who know the boys well — a process he said can't be duplicated by the other agencies.

Warner said he doesn't foresee problems with youth transferred

to private, as opposed to public, programs.

Private juvenile facilities are overseen by the state, which issues operating licenses and ensures state standards are met, he explained.

"We don't anticipate any problems, in fact probably none really," Warner said.

"We'll ensure that everything is in place before the youth is in place there," he added.

Michael LaFaive, director of fiscal policy for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, said that private and public facilities should bid openly to provide juvenile offender services.

LaFaive said the process would reveal the best services for the best price, as long as bidding occurs on an "apples-to-apples" basis for services.

He said discussion of cost savings sometimes overshadows quality of care issues.

"How do you measure a young man's psychiatric well-being? That is difficult," LaFaive said.

"If you do privatization right, it can save money and improve services," he added.

Warner said he doesn't view the reductions at Maxey as a first step in closing the facility, considered a last resort for youth offenders.

He said he didn't expect further reductions at the facility.

"There will always be a need for a Maxey program" for high-security offenders, Warner said.

Nathaniel Abraham, a youth sentenced to Maxey for murder, was perhaps the most high-profile inmate in recent years.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Christopher Behnan at (517) 548-7108 or at cbehnan@gannett.com.

Michigan Report

January 9, 2008

REPORT CALLS FOR NEW EFFORTS TO END POVERTY

A national report released Wednesday calls for the addition or expansion of a number of programs to reduce poverty. But Michigan officials said many of those recommendations were already underway here.

The report, *Rooting Out Poverty: A Campaign* by America's Community Action Network, made 64 recommendations in five theme areas for helping impoverished families to become self-sufficient.

Among the recommendations is developing systems that gather input from those who use public assistance programs, providing employment and financial literacy skills classes, ensuring access to early childhood education and developing networks of mentors.

"The report provides real specific strategies, many of which we in Michigan are already working on," said Ronald Borngesser, president of the Michigan Community Action Agency Association.

Among the other recommendations in the report, Mr. Borngesser said the MCAAA is working in many communities to be sure low-income workers have a way to get to work. "Transportation is a major barrier to poverty. You've got to be able to get to your job," he said. "In states like Michigan that don't have mass transit" affordable personal transportation is important. Local community action agencies are also working to be sure low-income residents are aware of the earned income tax credit, he said, adding that nationally some \$5 billion set aside for the credits goes undistributed because those eligible do not apply.

Many of the groups nationally are also developing prisoner re-entry programs to be sure those coming out of prison have job skills and can find work to prevent them from returning to prison.

And Daniel Piepszowski, a member of the Governor's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, said that body was charged with increasing participation of those receiving public assistance in the operation of those programs. The commission has already conducted two hearings and has four more planned around the state to gather input from impoverished residents on how the state can best assist them, he said.

"We do need to involve low-income individuals," Mr. Piepszowski said. "There's a sincere desire for those individuals to become self-sufficient." But James Crisp, executive director of the MCAAA, said the group does not expect additional state financial assistance in implementing or expanding any of the programs. "Right now additional state funds are out of the question," he said. While he said the state, particularly the Department of Human Services, is a partner with the groups, Mr. Crisp said most of their funding comes through federal grants. And he said they also have access to private foundation funding to supplement the government funds.